

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 18044 241701Z

53

ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 AGR-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6827

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 18044

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ETRD, UK, OECD

SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT

REF: (A) STATE 276928, (B) STATE 168630

1. EMBASSY CONSIDERS UK POLICY ON GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT AS EXPRESSED BY WITCHELL IH TCWP TO ESSENTIALLY BE PART OF OVERALL HARD LINE, REFLECTING PRIORITY GIVEN BY HM TREASURY TO BALANCE OF PAYMENTS ISSUES. WITCHELL'S SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS ON GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT ARE PROBABLY BEING FORMULATED AT A RELATIVELY LOW LEVEL AND NOT BEING FOCUSSED ON TO ANY GREAT DEGREE BY SENIOR POLICY LEVEL OFFICIALS -- ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NO FIRM EVIDENCE OF THIS.

2. THE FACT THAT UK REP TO TCWP IS FROM HM TREASURY RATHER THAN DEPARTMENT OF TRADE OR DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY IS INDICATIVE THAT GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT IS CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 LONDON 18044 241701Z

SEEN IN UKG AS FUNDAMENTALLY GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE AND

BALANCE OF PAYMENTS ISSUE. WITCHELL IS A RELATIVELY LOW LEVEL OFFICIAL IN DIVISION OF MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTING AND PURCHASING POLICY (ANALOGOUS TO OMB IN US). GIVEN THE OVERWHELMING IMPORTANT OF HM TREASURY IN GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE AND BALANCE OF PAYMENTS MATTERS AND THE LACK OF ANY REAL COUNTERBALANCING INFLUENCE IN DEPARTMENTS OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY, IT APPEARS LIKELY THAT WITCHELL'S POSITIONS IN TCWP REPRESENT A CARRYING OUT OF ESTABLISHED UK POLICY IN BROADEST SENSE. EXISTING, WELL PUBLICIZED STRUCTURAL WEAKNESS AND POOR COMPETITIVE POSITION OF MANY UK INDUSTRIAL SECTORS MAY HELP EXPLAIN RELUCTANCE OF UK TO ENTER FULLY INTO THE EXERCISE.

RICHARDSON

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